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May 14, 2013

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**ADOPTION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE CLOSURE  
OF BELLFLOWER MEDICAL CENTER EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT  
(SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT 4)  
(3 VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

Request adoption of written findings made by the Emergency Medical Services Agency's Impact Evaluation Report of the closure of Bellflower Medical Center Emergency Department.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:**

1. Approve the Impact Evaluation Report (IER), which concludes that the closure of Bellflower Medical Center (BEL) Emergency Department (ED) on April 3, 2013, will have a negative impact upon the community.
2. Instruct the Director of Health Services (Director), or his designee, to forward the IER (Enclosure) to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) within three days of adoption by the Board as required by California Health and Safety (H&S) Code Section 1300.

### **PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

On April 3, 2013, BEL notified the CDPH, Health Facilities Inspection Division and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency of the immediate closure of its ED.

BEL administrators cited financial reasons as the basis of the closure. The EMS Agency immediately instructed EMS provider agencies to begin diverting 9-1-1 traffic away from BEL ED. All base hospitals and 9-1-1 receiving hospitals affected by the closure were notified of the change.

The EMS Agency has prepared an IER outlining the impact of this closure on the EMS system in the County of Los Angeles.

Approval of the recommendations validates the EMS Agency's IER findings that the closure of BEL ED will have a negative effect upon the community; and instructs the Director to forward the IER to CDPH.

### **Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

The recommended actions support Goal 3, Integrated Services Delivery of the County's Strategic Plan.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

There is no direct net County cost associated with the closure of BEL ED; however, County hospitals could be directly impacted if patients previously seen at BEL ED seek medical care at those facilities.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

California H&S Code Section 1255.1 requires hospitals to provide at least 90 days advance notice of any planned reduction or elimination of emergency medical services to the CDPH, the County, and healthcare service plans or other third party payers under contract with the hospital. Public notice must also be provided in a manner that is likely to reach a significant number of residents served by the hospital and it must be given at least 90 days in advance of the projected closure date. However, a hospital is not subject to this requirement if the CDPH determines that the use of resources to keep the ED open substantially threatens the stability of the hospital. CDPH confirms that the basis for the immediate closure of BEL is based on its financial insolvency.

In addition, the hospital must take reasonable efforts to ensure that the community it serves is informed of the planned closure by advertising, soliciting media coverage and advising patients and third party payers. California H&S Code Section 1255.1 requires at least one public hearing; however, given the late notice, it was not possible to conduct the public hearing prior to the actual closure of the facility.

The EMS Agency has contacted the hospitals immediately surrounding BEL to determine the impact of the closure on their EDs. Tri-City Regional Medical Center stated that there has been a noticeable increase in their walk-in ED volume. Downey Regional Medical Center and Lakewood Regional Medical Center do not anticipate a significant impact on their ED's volume; however; both hospitals anticipate a significant impact to psychiatric and obstetrical services due to the closure of the entire hospital. These hospitals agree that it is still too soon after the closure to obtain definitive numbers

to determine the net impact.

The EMS Agency also contacted the Los Angeles County and Compton Fire Departments and Care Ambulance Service to determine the impact of the closure. These agencies reported that the closure of BEL ED will have a minimal negative impact on their operations, but will increase the length of time to transport patients to alternate emergency departments as well as the length of time that EMS personnel are held at busy emergency departments, waiting for available staff to transfer care.

By regulation, hospitals are required to provide to the EMS Agency a 90 day advance notice prior to downgrading or closure of the ED. In addition to providing timely notice to stakeholders and the public so alternate arrangements for care can be made, the advance notice period is designed to allow sufficient time for the IER to be prepared and a public hearing to be held with the hearing information to be incorporated into the IER. Section 1300 of the California H&S Code provides that this information be submitted for consideration by the State regulatory authorities in approving the closure of the ED. Because of the sudden closure of BEL ED, a comprehensive IER including results of the public hearing serve no purpose. Nevertheless, an IER has been prepared by the EMS Agency to assist in planning purposes.

#### **CONTRACTING PROCESS**

Not applicable.

#### **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The closure of BEL ED will have a negative impact on the community and the Los Angeles County EMS system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitchell Katz".

Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.

Director

MHK:db

Enclosures

c: Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
Director, Emergency Medical Services  
Emergency Medical Services Commission

**IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT**

On the Closure of Bellflower Medical Center Emergency Department

**I. PURPOSE OF IMPACT EVALUATION**

On April 3, 2013, Pacific Health Corporation notified the California Department of Public Health, Health Facilities Inspection Division and the Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency that they are closing the emergency department (ED) at Bellflower Medical Center (BEL) located at 9542 E. Artesia Boulevard, Bellflower, effective immediately. The purpose of this report is to assess the impact of the closure of BEL ED upon the community, including the impact on access to emergency care, the impact on services provided by surrounding hospitals, and the impact on services provided by public and private EMS provider agencies.

Following adoption by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Impact Evaluation Report (IER) will be submitted to the California Department of Public Health, in accordance with provisions of the Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Section 1300.

**II. SCOPE OF IMPACT EVALUATION**

The required scope of the IER is set forth in H&SC 1300. The impact evaluation will consider:

1. Impact of the BEL ED closure on surrounding hospitals, including specialty and disaster services.
2. Impact of the BEL ED closure on prehospital EMS provider agencies, including public and private providers.
3. The impact of BEL's closure on the surrounding community.

**III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

1. There are a total of seventeen (17) acute care facilities within ten miles of BEL. Of these seventeen facilities, six are within five miles.
2. BEL ED treated 10,602 patients in 2012, or approximately 29 patients per day.
3. BEL ED received 397 patients transported by the 9-1-1 system in 2010, or approximately 1 patient per day.
4. From an EMS perspective, the closure of BEL will impact the residents of Bellflower, Paramount, Lakewood, Norwalk, Artesia, North Long Beach and East Compton. EMS provider agencies that will be impacted include the Los Angeles County, Compton, Long Beach Fire Departments and Care Ambulance Services, all report longer transport times to alternate facilities and increased delay of prehospital personnel as they wait for transfer of patient care to hospital staff. These impacts will include:

- a. Longer travel times to reach emergency services. BEL currently receives 0.4% of the total number of patients transported by public and private provider agencies within the 10 mile radius. Los Angeles County Fire Department transports 88% of BEL's 9-1-1 volume and Compton Fire Department transports 12% of BEL's 9-1-1 volume.
  - b. Possible delays in obtaining prehospital emergency services as a result of longer out-of-service times for prehospital EMS personnel engaged in patient transports to more distant hospitals.
  - c. Loss of geographic availability of basic emergency department services for residents of Bellflower, Paramount, Lakewood, Norwalk, Artesia, North Long Beach and East Compton.
  - d. Loss of a community resource for disaster purposes.
  - e. Loss of 10 critical care beds.
  - f. Increased requests from remaining hospitals to divert 9-1-1 ambulances due to an inability to move greater numbers of patients through their emergency departments.
  - g. Possible increased utilization of 9-1-1 by citizens who currently walk or drive to BEL.
5. The combined total number of emergency treatment stations in the 10 mile radius is 482 beds (does not include urgent care beds). The closure of BEL would reduce the number to 479 treatment stations.
6. Hospital emergency visits to facilities within the 10 mile radius were 739,782 patients for 2011. This equals 1,534 patients per treatment station. The closure of BEL would result in a ratio of 1,544 patients per treatment station (assuming patients currently seen at BEL would seek emergency care at one of the hospitals within the 10 mile radius).
7. Data on emergency treatment stations is contingent upon all hospitals within the 10 mile radius continuing to operate emergency services.
8. Patients with non-life-threatening illness or injury will most likely experience longer waiting times in the emergency departments of surrounding hospitals due to the closure of BEL.
9. BEL is not an Emergency Department Approved for Pediatrics (EDAP) so prehospital care providers were directed to other facilities if their patient was age 14 or younger. The only children evaluated and cared for in the BEL ED would have been walk-ins. There will be no impact to children in terms of 9-1-1 transports.
10. BEL is not a designated trauma center. There will be no impact on patients that meet trauma center criteria or guidelines.

11. BEL is not a ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) Receiving Center. There will be no impact to 9-1-1 patients experiencing a STEMI.
12. BEL is not an Approved Stroke Center. There will be no impact to 9-1-1 patients experiencing a stroke.
13. BEL had a total of 144 licensed beds, of which, 32 were obstetrical and 32 inpatient psychiatric. There will be a significant impact to surrounding community and hospitals for patients requiring obstetrical and psychiatric care.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on the above findings, the Los Angeles County EMS Agency concludes that the closure of the emergency department and acute care beds at BEL will have a negative impact on access to, and delivery of, emergency medical services in Paramount and the surrounding communities.